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ARTICLE VII.

LETTERS OF JOHN McLEAN TO
JOHN TEESDALE.

EDITED BY WILLIAM SALTER.

[The Honorable John McLean was a member of Congress from Ohio, 1813-16; Judge of the Supreme Court of Ohio, 1817-22; Postmaster-General, 1823-30; Judge United States Supreme Court, 1830-61. In these offices his ability and integrity gave him eminence as a statesman, and won for him the support of many as a candidate for President, "because he would continue as a dispassionate and impartial judge in the Presidential chair, in which only a statesman should be seated, to hold the scales of justice between the North and the South."¹ Among his supporters were James W. Grimes, of Iowa, in 1848, and Thaddens Stevens, of Pennsylvania, and Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, in 1856. "Whether, if nominated and elected, McLean would have proved equal to the situation, is a question to which no answer can be given."² His own views upon the questions then at issue were freely communicated in letters to a confidential friend who was then an editor in Ohio. They throw light upon a dark time of American history. Their sentiments and elevated tone make them worthy of attention from those who would keep our country to the front among the nations in the moral order of the world.—W. S.]

CINCINNATI, 27 *March*, 1846.

I HAVE RECEIVED your friendly letter in regard to the future course of the Whig party. No one who has not been familiarized with the action of the Government at Washington can form any adequate idea how low it has fallen. I do not consider the office of chief magistrate as an object of honorable ambition except for the purpose of rescuing our institutions from their rapidly downward tendency, and placing them on the principles which consti-

¹ Constitutional and Political Hist., U. S., Von Holst.

² Von Holst.



tuted the basis of the Republican administrations of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. And I declare solemnly, as I have often done, that without having any pretension to the office, if it were offered to me I would reject it with disgust, unless it were conferred on such principles as would enable the administration to correct the fatal abuses which now exist.

The arrangement to bring out General Scott, at Washington, to which you refer, I have reason to believe had no foundation in fact. I was invited to the dinner party at which it was said to have taken place, but could not go. Whatever may have been said on the subject on that occasion, I presume, must have been said in jest to General Scott, who was present and probably took in earnest what in the merriment of the hour was said in jest. Mr. Mangum, who was represented to be on that occasion the most active, has disclaimed the intention attributed to him; and Webster, who was of the party, said a few days ago that under no circumstances could Massachusetts be induced to vote for Scott.

It would be extraordinary if Mr. Clay's friends should again bring him before the country. One thing is certain, that without his consent they will make no such effort. Personally, I have no feeling in this matter. What little influence I could exercise was given to Mr. Clay in the last contest. I never voted against him, or for his opponent.

No sane mind can suppose that the Locofoco party will have more than one candidate at the approaching contest. The distracted state in which the party now is, only requires a judicious course by the Whigs to insure an overwhelming defeat of that party. The people are tired of ultra-party struggles, and thousands of Locofocos see and admit that the Government must be overthrown, unless party violence and corruption shall be proscribed. If the Whigs sincerely desire to reform the Government, they

will look more to that object than to the individual through whose instrumentality it shall be accomplished. To merely gain a victory by party organization will make no reform. An administration by the Whigs that shall have no higher object than to reward its friends and punish its enemies, instead of retrieving our affairs, will only hasten the ruin which awaits us. The Whigs as a party can never govern this country except on the highest principles. Four years out of twenty would be as much power as they can hope for on any system of demagogism. The Locofoco party will always succeed in controlling the lower and baser passions of our nature. To get power and retain it, the Whigs must reach and rouse the moral tone of society, and bring it to bear upon the whole action of the Government. Demagogism must be put down.

The caucus system as a means of creating and controlling public sentiment must be abandoned. Let the people do their own work without the aid of political managers. This should be the Whig basis. The other side cannot take one step without a caucus. On this ground the Whigs can insure a victory more overwhelming than the one achieved by the name of General Harrison; and it will give a power to the new administration to do whatever the public interest requires. On this ground only, in my judgment, is the Presidential office desirable.

You see that I write to you without restraint; for, although I have not the pleasure of your personal acquaintance, I know that you are deserving of high confidence. The journal you chiefly edit, as I learn from your letter, is conducted with great ability and tact, and I have pleasure in giving you this opinion.

CINCINNATI, 9 July, 1846.

Your favor of the 4th inst. relates to a subject of great interest and of no little delicacy. The charge of Jackson-

ism rests upon no better basis than the following: I never knowingly or intentionally influenced an individual to support or vote for General Jackson. I never voted a Jackson ticket. When General Jackson invited me to remain at Washington, I told him that I had not done anything to advance his election, but that, in the discharge of my official duties, I had been actuated by no other motive than to promote the public interests. He approved of my course; but it was found before his administration commenced that I could not take one step with them. The bench was offered to me, and I accepted it. I censured the course of the administration, and was denounced from time to time by the *Globe*. Toward the close of Mr. Adams's administration, I was denounced as favorable to the election of General Jackson, and, knowing that this was done with a view to my removal from office, I was too proud to offer a word of explanation. I stood upon my rights, and was ready to receive the blow. So much for my Jacksonism.

No person in the Union desires more ardently than I do, the ascendancy of Whig principles generally. . . . Let the intelligence of the country be called into its service. Let men be appointed to office, not because they are Whigs, but because they are best qualified to fill public appointments; and in a short time more Whigs will be engaged in the public service than could be advanced under any other rule of appointment. On this ground only can Whig principles be maintained, and the Government be brought back to the purity and energy of its original principles. If the chief magistracy were within my reach, I declare most solemnly and firmly that I would reject it on any other principles than these. If placed in so eminent a charge, I will reform the Government or fall in the attempt. To fall under such circumstances would be a higher and nobler destiny than to sustain myself upon the

dishonorable, disgusting, and corrupting policy which has disgraced the country for so many years.

CINCINNATI, 26 *September*, 1846.

Among those who are acquainted with Mr. Schenck [Robert C.] at Washington, his political opinions have little weight. Some suppose that he acts under the sanction of Corwin. Mr. Corwin professes to be a warm friend, but *he has his fears* that I may not be available. I do not charge him with duplicity, but he hesitates as to future results. On such subjects he has little confidence in his own opinions. He never leads, and would like to follow one who is confident. Schenck by his impulsiveness, though a gentlemanly man, has always been a dead weight on his party. He was mainly instrumental in breaking up the Legislature some years since, which threw the Whigs into a minority in the State.

In regard to the Bank of the United States, it should be kept out of the ensuing contest. It can do no good, and may do much harm. I was a member of Congress when the charter of the late Bank of the United States was passed, and voted against it. My principal objection was that it authorized the holder of the scrip of the United States to subscribe it at par (of the last loan) when there was paid for one hundred dollars in scrip eighty dollars in depreciated paper, which was not worth more, I think, than fifty dollars in specie. The stock of the Bank was expected to appreciate, and it did appreciate twenty-five per cent in a short time. I considered that the holders of this scrip were not entitled to this bounty of the Government, that they should be permitted to subscribe it at the amount paid for it to the Government. This was the view which governed me, right or wrong.

Mr. Madison considered the constitutional question of the Bank as settled by the repeated action of the legislat-

ive, executive, and judicial branches of the Government. And this was the opinion of the Democratic party in Congress when the late Bank was chartered, with two or three exceptions. The question is undoubtedly settled as fully as it is possible to settle any question arising on the construction of the Constitution. I consider this bank question as the plaything of the demagogue; and if the Whigs act wisely they will abstain from making issues which cannot advance their interests and will be made to operate against them. On this question twenty thousand votes may be lost, perhaps a greater number. It would injure the Whigs much in Pennsylvania.

A tariff sufficient to meet the economical expenditures of the Government, so graduated as to encourage our own industry, I have for years believed was the proper policy. The truth is, that Andrew Stewart of Pennsylvania consulted me, and it was on my advice that he made his first speech last winter on the tariff. That speech did more in Pennsylvania than all the other speeches delivered in Congress; and Stewart made this speech against the remonstrances of his Whig friends generally.

I have been in favor of distributing the proceeds of the public lands among the States. I was among the first, if not the first, who broached that policy. But why should this be dragged into the contest? It will do mischief and not add a vote to the party. The South is generally opposed to it.

The veto power, I think, should be modified. I have never known the exercise of it to do good; only evil results from it. Perhaps a majority should pass the bill after considering the reasons of the President.

As to the annexation of Texas, why inquire about that? Why not ask whether I was opposed to any other thing which is now beyond the reach of the Government? Texas is annexed, and we cannot change it. Then why shall

the Whigs make this a point among themselves? It is known that the Southern Whigs were in favor of annexing Texas. The Whigs in Congress of North Carolina with some exceptions voted for it, and I believe all the Whigs of Georgia and Tennessee. There is not a Whig member from either of those States who does not know that I was opposed to the annexation of Texas; but knowing the honesty of my convictions, it produced no unfriendly feelings. The effect would be different with the people at large if my friends were to publish my views on the subject at this time. Corwin voted against the annexation at the last session, and by doing so he said in his late speech at Ridgeville that he had destroyed his popularity in the South. The compact having been made, the South considered that vote as more objectionable than a vote against the first proposition to annex. These things are not for future action; why then drag them before the country at this time? As to the order for the army to leave Corpus Christi and invade Mexico, every one that I have conversed with knows that I have been utterly opposed to it. The question is asked for no other purpose than to embarrass, and do mischief particularly to myself. I have no opinion that I am not ready to avow on any occasion that may be proper, but I shall not subject myself to be catechized by those who have no other than an unfriendly object.

My opinions on all the leading questions of the day are the same now that they have ever been. When in office or out of it they have been openly avowed. Before I was of age to vote they were formed in the Jefferson school. In Congress until the close of the war, my votes show my opinions. I was an ardent and decided supporter of the war and of the administration. No man was more intimate with Colonel Monroe than I was, or gave his administration a more sincere and hearty support. Toward the

latter part of his second term I was Postmaster-General, and possessed not only his confidence, but his warm friendship. I continued Postmaster-General through Mr. Adams's administration. In all things I gave it that support which I should wish a postmaster-general to give to me, if I were at the head of the Government. It is true, jealousies grew up during that period because I would not use my official influence in the contest. I stated to Mr. Adams, that, as Postmaster-General, I would have nothing to do in making him President, or General Jackson; that I would devote my whole energies to serve the public. I never did an act with the view to advance the election of General Jackson; no man now living or dead did I attempt to influence. Because I would not enter into the contest, I was denounced as a Jackson man by one or two papers friendly to the administration. Knowing the object was to remove me from office, I stood upon my avowed principles, but I scorned the imputation, and would not, and did not, say one word in explanation.

To General Jackson I said, on his sending for me when he was about organizing his cabinet, "Before you make any proposition to me, I wish to remark, that you may perhaps be under an impression, from charges made against me in certain papers, that I have promoted your election; I wish you to know that I have done no such thing. If I had done so, under the circumstances, I should consider myself as unworthy of your confidence; and I wish you distinctly to understand that what I have done I shall continue to do. I will not swerve from my principles a hair's-breadth."

I could not, and did not, take one step with the administration. The bench was proffered to me, and I accepted it. I do not recollect that I approved of any measure of Jackson's administration that was a topic of general discussion. I was denounced in the administration papers often,

and General Jackson became very hostile to me. I did General Jackson justice in conversation when I thought he was unjustly assailed. I did the same thing to Mr. Adams. General Jackson offered me my choice of either the War or Navy department, which I declined.

In 1831, I declined a nomination for the Presidency proposed to be made by the Anti-Masonic party at Baltimore. Mr. Wirt was nominated. Notwithstanding I positively declined in three or four letters to the members of the convention, nearly half the convention cast their votes for me; Governor Seward, John C. Spencer, and Thurlow Weed were members of that convention.

In 1835, every Whig member of the Ohio Legislature, with the exception of one, named me for the Presidency. I withdrew my name for the reason that two or three others on the same side seemed determined to remain in the field. From the first I said to my friends, If the issue be made between Mr. Van Buren and myself, I have no fears as to the result, but I will not stand if the party shall be divided.

A letter lately received from Governor Seward says: "Rely upon it, New York will be Whig in 1848"; and he speaks in unequivocal terms in reference to the successful use of my name. From Mississippi the most friendly assurances are given with a strong hope of success. In fact from every quarter friendly reports are received, with the exception of papers attached by relationship and close associations with my friend Corwin. Many prominent Locofocos profess themselves ready to act. The prospect of the party is as good as can be desired. But this may be changed by a few impulsive and selfish politicians who care more for themselves than the country. I am fully aware that, having been withdrawn from politics since I left the office of Postmaster-General, the young and ardent stump men of the State have little knowledge of me, and may be hostile, should they prefer another.

The office of chief magistrate is now not worthy of an honorable ambition except thoroughly to reform the Government, and this can never be accomplished until the moral tone of the people be brought to bear upon political action.

WASHINGTON, 11 *December*, 1846.

I had a conversation with Gales last evening, and I find that he has become alarmed at the misguided ultraism of some of the Whigs. Should they give a direction to the party, the present Whig ascendancy will be destroyed even more rapidly than the Harrison majority. Mr. Schenck, I am told, is very active in declaring to the members of the House of Representatives that under no circumstances can I carry Ohio, if nominated. Now if he is the Whig party, or the exponent of the Whig party, it may be so. But my impression is that I could bring to the Whigs twenty thousand more votes than any other person. Not that the ultra Whigs will not prefer anybody rather than me, but they would vote right in the event of a nomination, and the conservative vote of the other party and the Liberty party would make up the above number. Whilst I would not cross the street for the office, and would not accept it on any other than the highest principles, I confess that the course taken by a few produces some excitement. Aside from that, I would say to my friends, Throw me aside and concentrate upon any one else. I have no doubt that a strong movement in Ohio by the Legislature would be decisive not only as to Ohio, but as to the Union. One of the most intelligent gentlemen from Michigan, who is not in Congress, told me this morning that a hearty coöperation of my friends in the other States would make my success certain in Michigan. This gentleman is a leader of the Democratic party and as prominent as any other in that State. I am aware that my position is deli-

cate. The friends of Clay, Scott, Corwin, would feel an interest in prostrating me. It would not be judicious, therefore, to make an issue which shall excite them. You will soon know the feelings of the members. They should know the efforts that have been used, and the prospect in other States, and also that I do not seek the office, as I do not. If they are disposed to work out a reform, and put down Locofocoism, it cannot be done by such men as Schenck.

WASHINGTON, 17 *December*, 1846.

Finding no other ground on which to assail me here, Schenck is busily circulating among the members that I voted for Van Buren in 1836. This is wholly false. I not only did not vote for Van Buren, but I never in my life voted an Anti-Whig ticket. Harrison was brought out by the friends of Mr. Clay. When my friends first used my name, I told them that, if the issue could be between Mr. Van Buren and myself, I would consent; but, if more than one name should be brought out on the Whig side, I would decline, as I would not accept the office through the House of Representatives. Webster was a candidate in the North, Judge White in the South, and, Harrison being brought out, I declined. I may have said, as I now say, that Van Buren was better qualified to discharge the duties of chief magistrate than Harrison, but I never voted for Van Buren. My impression is that I was in Kentucky when the Presidential election took place in 1836. My court commenced there in November, and the election was in that month.

WASHINGTON, 22 *December*, 1846.

I had a long conversation with Mr. Mangum, the other day, who speaks with confidence as to the South. He says the States of North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and

Tennessee were safe, and that the leading Senator from Mississippi informed him recently that the ticket would carry that State against any other name except that of John C. Calhoun. Maryland is very unanimous, Pennsylvania is strongly inclined in the same direction, New Jersey stands well, and the prospect is flattering in New York. From several sources I have been informed that Greeley is friendly. In all New England, Mr. Webster out of the way, there would be, it is said, little difficulty. This would seem like settling the matter. What changes may transpire no one can tell. I have been surprised to hear so many leading men speak with a fixed determination against bringing Mr. Clay out again. A few desire to bring out Rough and Ready; and that, I think, Mr. Clay's Kentucky friends look to, if their first choice shall be defeated. The impression is general that it is premature to agitate the subject.

The administration is falling lower and lower, and it must soon become contemptible.

WASHINGTON, 2 *February*, 1847.

My friends here think everything is moving on as well as they could desire. The disposition to bring out General Taylor seems to be measurably relinquished. I am not sure, however, that the attacks on him by the administration may not do mischief. Mr. Corwin's strength has not, to my knowledge, increased beyond Mr. Schenck. Greeley is in the city, but I have not yet seen him. I shall not call upon him. At this point I was called to breakfast, and on my return found Mr. Greeley waiting for me. We had a long and an agreeable conversation in general. Nothing was said in particular in relation to the ensuing contest. Upon the whole my friends here see everything to encourage them. I am pressed, indeed overwhelmed, with the business of the court and other matters.

WASHINGTON, 6 *February*, 1847.

The movement you speak of surprises me. In this city, with the exception of Schenck, I am not aware that there is a single member of Congress for Corwin. They do not consider him as among the competitors for the Presidency. But this movement in Ohio may change things. The effort to elect Corwin will be in vain; but if my friends in Ohio abandon me, I shall withdraw. I have not a doubt of success with an ordinary effort on their part. But to be deserted at home is mortifying. I shall await the result, and do nothing hastily.

CINCINNATI, 6 *April*, 1847.

Of all the falsehoods which have been circulated against me, that of being favorable to the present war with Mexico is the most outrageous. I have never uttered a word or drawn a breath on this war which was not condemnatory. Never was a war undertaken, as I believe, for more unholy purposes. Had I been in Congress, I should have called for the return of the army to the Neuces; and, in granting the appropriation of ten millions and fifty thousand volunteers, I would have imposed a condition that the troops should not invade the Mexican territory. But the war was recognized by Congress. Without the slightest opposition, except the fourteen who voted against the war, these measures were passed, and the army invaded Mexico and achieved at Monterey a great victory.

Under these circumstances, I think that the Whigs as a party cannot oppose the supplies to the army. We must oppose the acquisition of territory. That is the true ground. I would as soon sustain any other robbery as to rob those poor wretches of their homes. This ground if manfully sustained would give us peace. It was in consequence of my suggestion that Mr. Stephens, of Georgia, offered the first resolution in Congress against the acquisi-

tion of territory. In the Senate, Judge Berrien copied substantially this resolution; afterwards Mr. Webster adopted, and finally every Whig, I believe, in both Houses voted for it. This expression will drive the administration to make a peace, to offer such terms as will be accepted by Mexico. I have reasons to believe that this has been done already.

At the next session there will be a majority of Whigs in the House. They will be as much opposed to robbing the Mexicans of their territory as the Whigs of the late House. What object is there then for the administration further to prosecute the war? No law can be passed which will sanction such an acquisition. And it would be hopeless to expect that two-thirds of the Senate could ratify a treaty which would give additional territory.

Several of my warmest friends have taken the ground to withhold supplies. They have acted conscientiously, and with their views I would not say they have acted wrong. But if my judgment is worth anything, this can have no effect to bring the war to a close. Such a vote cuts off from us the Southern States. We sacrifice the Whigs of North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. Such a position taken by the Whigs as a party overthrows all our hopes of reform and of a coming triumph. Indeed the measure would be suicidal. I have had some experience during the late war (1812-15), and I hesitate not to say, that, if we want to destroy ourselves as a party, we need only take this ground. And whilst it will destroy us, it can never bring the war to an end. My view is that the administration should be called on to offer terms to the Mexican government, asking no territory. No man breathes who detests this war more than I do. And I propose the only practicable mode of forcing the administration to make peace. This is the end we all aim at. And surely we all desire to secure a triumph to the Whig party. A

man must be blind to all the lights of experience who can hope to obtain a majority of votes in either House to withhold supplies; then why is this issue urged? It can never be made available. It can only destroy us. Let those who take this ground maintain it; and we should give them full credit for their honesty and patriotism; but why may not the mass of the Whig party who think differently ask of them the same toleration? Why shall we quarrel about this? This our opponents desire. We all agree that the war must be ended. Let us end it by reaching the administration at the most effectual point. A contrary course will distract and may ruin us. As wise men, as patriots, as Christians, we should take the ground most likely to remove from our country this terrible calamity. And when that is done, the authors of so much evil should be called to account.

Does some principle of selfishness lurk at the bottom of this movement among our friends? Agreeing in the great point, why quarrel about the details? But if a contrary course from that I have indicated be taken, a Southern man will be found at our head. I say no more, as I have but a common lot with others.

CINCINNATI, 14 *April*, 1847.

The effort to bring out General Taylor has been a confined one, extending to several gentlemen whose names were mentioned for the Presidency, but who, despairing of success, were determined, as the next best step for themselves, to elevate a man who would look to them for counsel and direction. The enthusiasm for General Taylor seems to be strong, and great efforts are made to increase its strength. I had supposed that he had good sense enough to decline a consent to the use of his name, as his position as Major-General would place him on higher ground and one more congenial to his taste and qualifica-

tions. Perhaps the military fever will overcome the objection to a Southern man and a large slaveholder. Some may suppose that to take a man from the army now for President may at the next election encourage the army on some pretext to make a President. But on this subject I shall acquiesce. Seeing the movements and dishonesty of politicians, my hope of reform such as will save our Government becomes weaker. I trust in God that there will be a majority of Whigs in the next House of Representatives that will go against the acquisition of territory, which would place before the country the single issue of land plunder. Unless the military fever shall sweep over the country, I have no fears of the future. But this may give the ascendancy to the South and its peculiar interests.

CINCINNATI, 29 April, 1847.

I have nothing to complain of my friends, but one hundred friends who remain passive may be overcome by a single vindictive and unprincipled enemy. Schenck, aided by one or two other persons, has done more to injure me in Ohio by false representations than a hundred friends have counteracted. At Washington, where I am better known than in Ohio, the efforts of Schenck are harmless.

By rallying upon Taylor, in all probability the Whig party will lay the foundation of its speedy overthrow. Admit that he may be elected with a rush, the elements will be discordant, and neither Taylor nor any one likely to be associated with him can give consistency and harmony to the future action of the party. He is rallied upon by a set of politicians determined to give ascendancy to the South and to advance themselves. If we must have a military republic with the view of extending Southern interests, I hope it may be under Taylor. As to Scott, there never was a more ridiculous thing proposed than to make him President. A vain, pompous, empty-pated man, who

always makes himself ridiculous among sensible men.

I see papers are coming out for Corwin in the northern part of the State. I may have been misled in supposing that I had friends there. Corwin was the first man that spoke to me on the subject of my becoming a candidate. Knowing him, I had not confidence in his sincerity, and I soon found that his professions of friendship were used to depress me. He was for Scott, and I shall expect to find him for Taylor. In short, he is for himself; and his instruments are active.

My impression has been that the military fever may subside, and the people may resume the exercise of reason. Before the military fever rose so high, my friends at Washington often said, if it were not for the opposition in Ohio, there would be a general concurrence among the Whigs, so as to supersede a national convention. But my Ohio friends seem to yield to the efforts of a few unscrupulous and selfish individuals.

CINCINNATI, 21 *August*, 1847.

A letter I received yesterday gives an account of movements in New York more favorable to Taylor than I had expected. The Whigs act as a flock of sheep, and it is probable they will be led by the South. A short time will indicate the course of coming events. My situation on the bench ties my hands, so that I can do nothing but talk with a very few friends.

23 *September*, 1847.—I have been overwhelmed day and night with the labor of my third volume of Reports. This is the first moment I have been relieved from the work.

WASHINGTON, 11 *January*, 1848.

Ohio might have controlled the election of chief magistrate, had she been united, but the time has passed, and

she has only to follow other States, instead of being at their head, as she might have been.

25 *January*, 1848.—Unless I am greatly deceived, the military fever is fast subsiding. This may be, in a considerable degree, attributable to Mr. Clay's movement. He is still here. We have had a friendly interview. I cannot speak particularly on the subject, but I do not believe that Mr. Clay is desirous that his name should be used, unless under circumstances that shall insure success. His friends will act judiciously, and not permit their attachment to him to blind them from facts. If they shall advise him to run, it will be under a conviction that he will succeed.

Doctor Bailey, in the *Era*, has fully indorsed my views in regard to the power of Congress over slavery. Giddings and, I believe, all the anti-slavery men in Congress will do the same.

WASHINGTON, 1 *February*, 1848.

Mr. Clay's presence here has abated the military fever; yet it may be again raised. If the non-slaveholding States shall remain firm, they may control the result. So far as I know, the friends of Mr. Clay here entertain no feelings of hostility to myself, and, should he withdraw, they will not go to Taylor. I have twice had very free and full conversations with Mr. Clay, and I am quite sure that he will not consent to the use of his name unless there shall be the highest assurance of success. And I do not believe that he will in this respect be as easily misled as he has heretofore been.

15 *February*, 1848.—A union of Ohio on myself would still control the result. But if Ohio shall be divided, there will be little or no prospect. If Ohio were united, the non-slaveholding States would wheel into line as soon as Mr. Clay shall withdraw, which seems to be generally anticipated.

1 *March*, 1848.—Corwin's friends have become the supporters of Mr. Clay under the hope that a conflict will be brought about between his friends and mine in Ohio, which shall induce the friends of Clay to rally upon Corwin, should Clay decline. Now this conflict of friends must be avoided. Schenck is at the bottom of this. The clique are desperate, and I fear that they will have a contest. There must be none, however, between Clay's friends and mine. My position has been taken, and was taken at the first, that if Mr. Clay's friends can come to the conclusion that he can be elected, I shall not be in the way. All my friends know that the office is not an object of solicitude with me, and that I do not desire it except under circumstances which shall lead to a thorough reform of the Government. And if Mr. Clay can be elected I shall be content and gratified. In the event of his declining, I am told his friends will unite with mine.

INDIANAPOLIS, 19 *May*, 1848.

Schenck reports that Ohio and New York are in a blaze for Scott. The object of my adversaries is to break me down in Ohio, and thereby promote their own selfish motives. In this State the people are united, and their delegation will present at the convention an unbroken front. If Ohio would do the same, the result would not be doubtful. I do not believe, if nominated, that Scott can carry the State. The Liberty party will not support him, and there are many thousands of our best Whigs who will not vote for him. The Quakers will not consider an individual whose merit consists, and qualifications for the Presidency, in his having fought well, and slain in a miserable war many thousands of his fellow-creatures.

DETROIT, 24 *June*, 1848.

Early in May I left home for my circuit, and since then

have been laboriously engaged, night and day, in the performance of my judicial duties. My enemies have triumphed, but they have gained nothing for the country or for Ohio. The result has not in the least affected my equanimity. You must not suffer yourself to be depressed. You shall not want a friend whilst I shall live.

WASHINGTON, 10 *December*, 1848.

General Taylor, I have no doubt, will act under the best motives, and by the advice of those he shall deem most worthy of his confidence. But he may have a less tranquil time than may be expected. The experiment is yet to be tried as to the success of an administration which must be controlled by the heads of departments. If these offices shall not be filled judiciously, there will be trouble. General Jackson was chiefly influenced by his friends; but the impression was, generally, that he dictated the course of his administration. This, I think, will not be the case with General Taylor. We must hope for the best, and I shall rejoice if he shall succeed beyond the expectations of his most ardent friends. He will have to meet the Wilmot proviso, and in sanctioning or vetoing it must give great offense to his friends either south or north of Mason and Dixon's line.

Ohio richly deserves her fate. A more unprincipled set of political jugglers never lived than was found in Ohio. Looked to as the leading Whig State, she might have led the Union, but she was sacrificed from selfish and personal considerations. And the very men who contributed to her debasement (the vote of Ohio went for the Democratic candidate, Lewis Cass) have been eulogized more than others for their efforts to sustain the Whig cause. At an early stage of the contest it seemed difficult to get a candidate who was Whig enough, and at last these very men rallied

on a man who said he would not be the candidate of any party or represent the principles of any party.

I did not approve of the candidate brought out by the Western Reserve, but I believe the Whigs of that part of Ohio showed a higher devotion to principle than the Whigs of any other part of the State. Unscrupulous as Schenck has been, he acknowledges that, in taking the course he did, he abandoned the Whig ground. I have no doubt that many of the Whig leaders would agree to the extension of slavery, if in doing so they could sustain themselves. But badly as I think of many of the Whigs, there is no hope for the country which does not rest upon the Whig party. And I should deeply regret to see the free-soil Whigs amalgamate with the Locofoco party. Without conciliation, the Whig party of Ohio is doomed to become a small party. They have been somewhat abusive of the free-soil Whigs who, I admit, have been equally violent. I hope a better feeling may be restored, and that on the free-soil ground a party may be rallied, having the Whigs for its basis, which shall carry three-fourths of the votes of Ohio and of all the free States.

CINCINNATI, 2 *November*, 1855.

The pressure of the business of my court is such that I have not a moment's leisure. I have regretted to see the course taken by Judge Kane. Next winter a case will be before the court, which involves the right of a slaveholder to bring his slaves into a free State for any purpose whatever.

I voted for Chase under protest. Our personal relations have always been friendly, but I have been opposed to his ultraism and to the means used for his own advancement. Statesmanship seems now to consist in arraying one part of the Union against the other in order to carry an election. This will soon ruin our Government. The ultra men are unwilling to plant themselves on the Constitu-

tion. The Supreme Court has decided that slavery exists by virtue of the municipal law, and is local. The Constitution gives Congress no power to institute slavery; then there can be no slavery in the Territories; for there is no power but Congress which can legislate for the Territories. Squatter-sovereignty is not a part of our Government.

When a people of a Territory come to form a State government, they have a right to say whether the State shall be a free or a slave State. And there is no more danger of a free Territory becoming a slave State than there is of a free State becoming a slave State. It is a question which belongs to the people of a State, and there is no danger in leaving a Territory open to be populated by the people of the Union. More than five will settle in it from the free States where one settler will come from the slave States.

As to the frauds of Missouri, they do not belong to our system, and they should be rebuked and punished by the national power, the Territory being under the protection of the Union and the power of Congress.

Our Government has been so corrupt that I have doubts now whether there is virtue enough in the country to reform the Government. All I have predicted in regard to this has been realized, and unless the demagogues who have ruled us for years can be put down, and the Government brought back upon its old foundations, it must come to an end, even sooner than I apprehended. You may as well build a castle in the air as to sustain a free government without a moral basis.

In regard to the other matter referred to in your letter, I have not thought of it. One thing is certain that if I could reach the office by every vote in the Union I would refuse it, unless it could be conferred on such principles as would lead to a thorough reformation. This I doubt is now out of the question. All the politicians are against me, and have been, as they have good reason to believe

change would be of little or no service to them. I can in truth that I do not desire the office. This hasty note I write to you in confidence. It is better that my opinions should only find their way to the public from the bench.

We have fifty-four of a majority from the free States in the House of Representatives. Is it not a shame that this majority cannot protect our rights? My opinion is that our efforts should be directed to reform ourselves in sending to Congress instable men.

CINCINNATI, 8 *March*, 1856.

I thank you for your very kind letter. Feeling no desire to change my position, I shall remain passive and await popular action. Knowing the manœuvres of politicians, I am sure we are to witness again, as we have for years past, that the demagogues are to control the people through the instrumentality of a convention. Look at the results of the late one in Philadelphia (Native American). A few Southern men undertook to divide the North, to secure a Southern victory. And yet Northern men are led by such means. Bluster is more successful than good sense. Popular government is a curse rather than a blessing, when wielded by selfish and corrupt men.

MINNESOTA, LAKE PEPIN, 3 *September*, 1859.

In regard to the ensuing election for President, I have given myself no other concern than to state, when occasion required, that this Government could not, unless reformed, continue twenty years. A torrent of corruption, wide and deep, has overspread the country, and must ruin it, unless speedily arrested. The convention at Philadelphia (1856) had the game in their own hands. They knew that Mr. Buchanan could be beaten in Pennsylvania, and that would have ended the controversy. But the bar-



gain had been made by a man not fit to discharge the duties of an auditor, and they determined that the spoils should be secured by them. Not a man in the South who did not know what the result would be on the above issue; and yet the North incurred the risk of defeat rather than give up the spoils system. Every one of Pierce's cabinet admitted they could be beaten, especially Marcy, their ablest man. The late Speaker of the House, Orr, said to me just after the election, "If you had been brought before the country, you would have smashed us up." I observed to him that I would have done another thing, and that is, I would have taught the South how to behave itself. He laughed and observed, "Perhaps you would." So far as I know, the fact is now generally admitted, but Fremont was nominated. To elect him, one of the managers said to a friend of mine, "A half million of dollars may be had to insure his election."

Now can any honest man trust such a body as that? I have said to no man that I should consent to the use of my name; but my friends have requested me to keep the subject open until the next Congress. General Cameron, a trading politician, has entered into an arrangement with Seward, and has engaged to transfer Pennsylvania. It is generally thought that a man of such known predilections and contracted qualities will not be able to carry out this arrangement. The result will be known by the next session of Congress. Upon the whole my friends think that nothing is lost by delay in this matter.

In regard to Chase, he is the most unprincipled man politically that I have ever known. He is selfish, beyond any other man. And I know from the bargain he has made in being elected to the Senate, he is ready to make any bargain to promote his interest. I know him well. I speak positively, because I know what I say.



